

BOTTLE BALL GAME

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to games that substantially mimic one or more aspects of a sport. More particularly, the invention relates to a game adaptable to substantially mimic playing or scoring aspects of a variety of sports, such as, for example a ball-shooting aspect of basketball or a kicking aspect of football, while making substantial use of inexpensive commonly available components, including glass or plastic bottles, such as water, soda, or beer bottles; ping pong balls; cardboard drink
10 coasters; and drinking straws.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

15 It is often desirable to provide and play games, particularly, for example, at a party, bar, or similar social setting. Furthermore, in many such situations it is desirable to provide and play games related to and, preferably, substantially mimicking a sport, such as, for example, basketball or football.

20 It will be appreciated that such games currently exist in a variety of forms, including medium-scale versions, electronic versions, and board and miniature game versions. Medium-scale versions involve actual playing equipment reduced in scale. Electronic versions include video games, such as stand-alone arcade games and home entertainment game systems, as well as electromechanical games, such as those employing vibration to move pieces and otherwise result in playing action. Board games typically include a game board, playing pieces, one or more die, and cards.

25 Unfortunately, all three versions suffer from common disadvantages making them undesirable for use in some settings. For example, all three can require components that are expensive, easily damaged or lost, or providable only in limited numbers. Specifically, medium-scale versions of many popular sports require more space than many social settings, such as private homes and bars, can conveniently or
30 safely accommodate. Electronic versions are expensive and easily damaged, and

therefore cannot be provided in sufficient quantities to satisfy more than a handful of customers or guests. Board and miniature games are too easily damaged and the components are easily lost. Furthermore, all three versions can require substantial initial acquisition costs, and may, depending upon their particular natures, require frequent costly repair, upgrade, or replacement.

Due to these and other problems and disadvantages in the art, an improved game is needed that substantially mimics one or more aspects of a sport.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention overcomes the above-described problems and disadvantages to provide a game adaptable to substantially mimic playing or scoring aspects of a number of different sports while making substantial use of inexpensive commonly available components, such as, for example, glass or plastic bottles, such as water, soda, or beer bottles; ping pong balls; cardboard drink coasters; and drinking straws.

In a preferred first embodiment, the game is adapted to substantially mimic a ball-shooting aspect of basketball. This first embodiment comprises a ball; a bottle; a backboard; a basket; and a ball return device. The ball may be constructed of any suitable material, such as plastic or foam; a conventional ping pong ball, for example, may be used. The bottle provides support for elevating and maintaining the backboard and the basket in a playing position. The bottle is preferably a beer, wine, or soda bottle. The backboard may be a custom structure, a simple cardboard drink coaster, or a cardboard cutout from food or other packaging, such as, for example, a cereal or shoe box. The basket comprises a rim and a net, wherein the net depends from the rim, the rim attaches to the backboard, and the backboard is attached to a mechanism for removably coupling with the bottle. The ball return device is coupled with the bottle directly below the basket such that the device operates to deflect the ball back into play following a successful shot.

In a preferred second embodiment, the game is adapted to substantially mimic a kicking aspect of football. This second embodiment comprises components

substantially similar to those described above; however, the backboard and the basket are replaced with a goal post assembly comprising a goal post, a crossbar, and left and right uprights. The left and right uprights may be constructed of two conventional drinking straws.

5 A rule set and rule variations are provided for each game, though all or particular rules may be eliminated, added, or changed as desired without departing from the scope of the present invention. Therefore, it will be appreciated, the game structures are independent of any particular rules.

10 Thus, it will be appreciated, the present invention provides a number of advantages over the prior art, including an inexpensive nature, being constructable of inexpensive and readily available components, which allows a host or proprietor to acquire and maintain an ample number of the games for use by guests or customers. Furthermore, the game is portable such that it may be easily transported to a table or booth for play. Additionally, the game allows for advertising, whether free or fee-
15 generating, in the form of business cards, drink coasters, or similar advertising announcements permanently or removably affixed to or acting as the backboard or ball return device.

20 These and other important aspects of the present invention are more fully described in the section entitled DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT, below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A preferred embodiment of the present invention is described in detail below with reference to the attached drawing figures, wherein:

25 FIG. 1 is a diagrammatical depiction of a preferred basketball embodiment of the present invention in operation, as viewed from the side;

FIG. 2 is an exploded side elevational view of a preferred first embodiment of a scoring structure portion of the basketball embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is an assembled side elevational view of the preferred first embodiment of the scoring structure shown in FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is an exploded side elevational view of a preferred second embodiment of the scoring structure portion of the basketball embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a rear elevational view of the preferred second embodiment of the scoring structure shown in FIG. 4;

FIG. 6 is an exploded side elevational view of a preferred third embodiment of the scoring structure portion of the basketball embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is a side elevational view of a preferred embodiment of a retaining clip portion of the basketball embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 8 is a side elevational view of the retaining clip of FIG. 7 mounted on a cylindrical structure which is, in turn, mounted on a bottle;

FIG. 9 is a side elevational view of a preferred embodiment of a basket portion of the basketball embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 10 is a front elevational view of a preferred embodiment of a shot blocking component for use with the present invention;

FIG. 11 is a side elevational view of a preferred embodiment of a shot ramp component for use with the present invention;

FIG. 12 is a diagrammatical depiction of a preferred football embodiment of the present invention in operation, as viewed from the side;

FIG. 13 is a front elevational view of a preferred scoring structure portion of the football embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 14 is a side elevational view of the scoring structure shown in FIG. 13 coupled with a bottle using a preferred first coupling mechanism;

FIG. 15 is a front elevational view of the scoring structure shown in FIG. 13 coupled with the bottle using a preferred second coupling mechanism;

FIG. 16 is a side elevational view of a preferred kicking device for use with the football embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 17 is a front elevational view of a preferred first configuration of a backstop device for use with the present invention; and

FIG. 18 is a front elevational view of a preferred second configuration of the backstop device.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring to FIG. 1, a bottle ball game 20 is shown constructed in accordance with a preferred basketball embodiment of the present invention wherein the game 20 is adapted to substantially mimic a ball-shooting aspect of the sport of basketball while making substantial use of inexpensive existing components. The game 20 is easily adaptable to mimic aspects of other sports as well, and a preferred football embodiment 200, adapted for substantially mimicking a kicking aspect of the sport of football, is also described herein (see FIGs. 12-16). Exemplary rule sets for use in playing the games 20,200 are set forth below; it will be appreciated, however, that the games 20,200 may be considered independent of some or all of the rules in that rules may be added, eliminated, or changed without departing from the contemplated scope of the present invention.

The preferred basketball embodiment of the game 20 broadly comprises a ball 22; a bottle 24; and a scoring structure 26. The ball 22 may be a foam or plastic ball of suitable shape, size, and weight given the sport being mimicked. In the present embodiment, for example, a conventional ping-pong ball may be used to mimic a basketball. As desired, the ball 22 may be colored or textured to more closely resemble an actual ball used in the sport.

The bottle 24 elevates and stabilizes the scoring structure 26 in a playing position. The bottle 24 may be an open glass bottle, such as, for example, a commonly available water, juice, beer, wine, or liquor bottle, or a closed plastic bottle, such as, for example, a commonly available two liter, one liter, twenty ounce, or sixteen ounce soft drink bottle or other plastic bottle having a similarly sized cap. The bottle 24 may be weighted as needed to maintain stability; suitable weighting materials include, for example, marbles, sand, or fluid.

Referring also to FIGs. 2-9, the scoring structure 26 or goal will vary depending upon the sport. In the present embodiment 20, however, the scoring structure 26 mimics the backboard and basket structures of basketball, and comprises a retaining clip 28; a backboard 30; a basket 32, including a rim 34 and a net 36; a ball deflector 38; and a shot ring 40. In the football embodiment 200, described below, the scoring structure 226 mimics the goalpost assembly of football.

The retaining clip 28 couples the backboard 30 with an open mouth portion 44 of the bottle 24, thereby securely supporting the backboard 30 in the elevated playing position. Two types of retaining clips are contemplated, a first clip 28 for open glass bottles (see FIGs 1-6), and a second clip 29 for closed plastic bottles (see FIGs. 7 and 8). The first clip 28 includes an upper spring leg 50, operable to compressively engage the backboard 30, and a lower spring leg 55, operable to compressively engage an open mouth portion 44 of the bottle 24.

The second clip 29 includes an upper spring leg 51 and two lower spring legs 57 operable to be placed over and engage a substantially hollow cylindrical structure 59 placed over a bottle cap portion 61 of a closed bottle 25, thereby further elevating the scoring structure 26. A suitable cylindrical structure 59 is found in a conventional 35mm film case. Alternatively, the second clip 29 may be placed directly over the bottle cap portion 61 of the closed bottle 25. Rubber bands 63,65 may be used to further secure the clip 29 to the bottle 25.

Furthermore, each type of clip may, as desired, couple with the backboard 30 either fixedly (see FIG. 2) , resulting in a stiffer rebound effect, or rotatably (see FIGs. 4), absorbing rebound energy to result in a softer rebound effect. Rotation may be achieved using a hinge-type connection 53 on the upper leg 50, 51, of the retaining clip 28,29. After such rotation, the weight of the backboard 30 returns it to the playing position.

The backboard 30 serves the same function as backboards used in basketball - to deflect the ball 22 either into the basket 32 or back into play. The backboard 30 may be any other suitable shape, including square or rectangular, with sharp or rounded corners, or circular; and may be constructed of any suitable material,

including plastic, cardboard, or wood; and may be cut from food or other packaging, such as, for example, a cereal or shoe box. Thus, for example, in one embodiment, shown in FIGs. 2-4, the backboard 30 preferably provides a mechanism for displaying an advertisement, such as a drink coaster or business card, whether permanently or removably attached thereto, such as, for example, by a rubber band or glue. In another embodiment, shown in FIG. 6, the backboard 20 is nothing more than a conventional cardboard drink coaster 70. Where the backboard 30 is of sufficient thickness, a clip slot 48 may be let into the bottom thereof so as to receive the upper leg 50 of the retaining clip 28. Where the hinge-type connection 53 is used, the backboard may present a hinge slot operable to pivotably receive and retain the hinge-type connection 53.

As shown in FIG. 2, the backboard 20 may further comprise a hook 54 and one or more magnets 56. The hook 54 is operable to hold one end of a rubber band 58, with the band's other end being engaged by the retaining clip 28, thereby securely coupling the backboard 30 with the clip 28. The hook 28 may also be operable to allow the backboard 30 to be hung therefrom, such as on a wall, when not in use. The one or more magnets 56 allow the backboard 30 to be magnetically attached to a surface, such as, for example, a refrigerator or filing cabinet, when not mounted upon the bottle 24. It will be appreciated that other mechanisms, such as, for example, suction cups (not shown), may also be used to removably affix the backboard 30 to a surface.

In another embodiment, referring to FIGs. 4 and 5, the hook 54 is eliminated and two pairs of slots 62,64, are cut into the backboard 30 to receive end portions of rubber bands 58,68 so that the bands 58,68 may be stretched therebetween to securely hold, respectively, the retaining clip 28 and a drink coaster 46.

As mentioned, referring also to FIG. 9, the basket 32 comprises the rim 34 and net 36, which are analogous to those structures found on full-sized regulation basketball equipment. The net 36 may be constructed of plastic, cotton mesh, wire mesh, knotted string, or similar material. The net 36 is glued, tied, snapped, looped, or otherwise attached to the rim 34, which is attached to a rim clip 72, which is attached

to the backboard 30 using any suitable means, such as, for example, the rubber band 58. Alternatively, the net, rim, and backboard 36,34,32, may be provided as a single, inseparable unit, thereby facilitating storage and preventing loss of individual components. The rim 34 is proportionally sized to pass the ball 22; the net 36 depends from the rim 34 and may be constructed from either natural or synthetic material. The rim clip 72 may be constructed of metal or plastic; presents a hook 74 at one end for attaching the rubber band 58; and may include a hinge 76 to allow the basket 32 to be folded substantially flat against the backboard 30 for storage.

Referring again to FIG. 1, the ball deflector piece 38 couples with the bottle 24 directly beneath the net 36 and presents a flat surface 80 operable to deflect the falling ball 22 back into play. The flat surface 80 of the ball deflector piece 38 may comprise, for example, a drink coaster, a business card, or a plastic sleeve operable to permanently or removably retain a business card or other advertisement or message. The deflector piece 38 may be coupled with the bottle 24 using any suitable means, such as, for example, a rubber band 82 and a binder clip 84. The flat surface 80 should extend outwardly from the bottle 24 at an angle of approximately 45° so as to properly serve its deflection function.

The shot ring 40 may be used, as described below, to add difficulty to the game by requiring that a shot attempt first bounce within the horizontally-positioned ring 40 (as shown in FIG. 1) or pass through the vertically-positioned ring (not shown) 40 prior to entering the basket 32. The ring 40 may be constructed of any material, such as, for example, plastic or wood, and may be of adjustable size or of any appropriate fixed size. Furthermore, multiple rings 40 may be used simultaneously or in the course of a single game to vary the playing challenge.

Referring also to FIG. 10, an optional shot blocking device 90 is shown operable to be used, in some variations of the game 10, by a first player to block the shot of a second player. The blocking device 90 broadly comprises a paddle 92 and a handle 94. The paddle 92 may be any suitable shape, such as round or square, preferably 1.5-2.0 inches in diameter or width, and constructed of any suitable material, such as plastic, wood, or cardboard. To facilitate coupling the paddle 92 with the

handle 94, the paddle 92 may present a coupling projection 96 operable to securely engage the handle 94. The handle 94 may any elongated substantially cylindrical structure, but is preferably a conventional drinking straw or pen or pencil. In the illustrated embodiment, the handle 94 is a hollow drinking straw and the paddle 92 is coupled therewith by the cylindrical projection 96 which removably fits snugly within one end of the straw 94.

Referring also to FIG. 11, an optional shot ramp 98 is shown operable to facilitate shot-making from the playing surface. The shot ramp 98 is a curved ramp operable when the ball 22 is placed upon the ramp 98 and a force applied to the ball 22, to launch the ball 22 with an upward trajectory toward the basket 32. Such force may be applied with a finger in any of a number of well-known ways. Optionally, a clip 97 may be included operable to secure the shot ramp 98 to the playing surface.

Referring also to FIG. 17, a preferred first embodiment of an optional backstop 320 is shown operable to facilitate preventing a shot, whether successful or not, from leaving the playing surface. The backstop 320 includes a net 322 supported by or between bottles 324 or rods 325 or any combination thereof. In operation, the optional backstop 320 is placed behind the scoring structure 26 such that a shot that passes through or to the side of the scoring structure 26 is prevented by the net 322 from leaving the area of the playing surface, or is at least prevented from traveling a substantial distance therefrom. Referring also to FIG. 18, where only rods 325 are used to support the net 322, a stabilizing mechanism 327 may be attached to the bottom of one or more of the rods 325 as an aid in keeping the rods 325 stable and upright during use. The stabilizing mechanism 327 may take the form of, for example, weights or suction cups. The backstop 320 or a substantially similar concept may also be used with the football embodiment of the game 200, described below.

A rule set for use with the preferred basketball embodiment of the game 20 is set forth as follows. As noted, however, rules may be added, eliminated, or changed as desired without departing from the contemplated scope of the present invention. Broadly, the game 20 is meant to be played by one or more players who

attempt to shoot the ball 22 into the basket 32 to score points while (optionally) avoiding penalties. In multi-player games, the player with the highest points wins.

Points may be assigned based upon type of shot and level of difficulty. Alternatively, points may be assigned based upon distance, wherein, for example, a successful free throw from one foot away may be worth one point if the ball 22 first contacts the backboard 30, or two points if the ball 22 enters the rim 34 and the net 36 directly (called a "swish"); a shot inside three feet may be worth two points, or three for a swish; a shot outside of three feet may be worth three points, or four for a swish. As another alternative, a combination of the two scoring schemes may be used, wherein, for example, points are first calculated based upon distance and thereafter increased by a multiple associated with shot difficulty.

A variety of shots are possible, some being more difficult than others:

bottle shot	ball 22 placed on top of open second bottle (not shown) and flicked with finger into basket 32;
fall away bottle shot	ball 22 flicked from open second bottle as second bottle is slid away from basket 32 (double points);
jump shot	ball 22 tossed overhand into basket 32;
hook shot	ball 22 tossed backhanded into basket 32;
bounce shot	ball 22 must bounce off of playing surface before entering basket 32;
double bounce shot	ball 22 must bounce twice off of playing surface before entering basket 32 (double points);
free throw	a bounce shot, wherein ball 22 must bounce off of playing surface at least twelve inches from basket 32, or a bottle shot taken twelve inches from basket 32;
trick shot	ball 22 bounced over, under, through, or off of any object on the playing surface (points based upon difficulty/creativity);

low angle of floor shot ball 22 flicked from low angle on wadded napkin, spoon, or bottle cap resting on playing surface (triple points).

A number of variations of the aforementioned shots are also possible, including:

swish	any shot wherein ball 22 enters basket 32 without hitting rim 34 (double points);
blind shot	any shot taken with eyes closed (triple points);
off hand shot	any shot taken with non-dominant hand (one extra point);
shot spot	any shot taken from a previously marked spot.

Additionally, the shot ring 40 may be used to increase shot difficulty, wherein the shot ring 40 is positioned flat on the playing surface or held in midair by another person or bottle or other suitable structure, and the ball 22 bounced within or through the shot ring 40, respectively, prior to entering the basket 32. The shot ring 40 may be of any suitable fixed or adjustable shape and size. Alternatively, one or more shot rings 40 of different shapes or sizes may be used either in conjunction or singly, with the shape and size determining shot difficulty.

Penalties may be included to increase the game's overall level of difficulty. Preferably, penalties must be called by an opponent before the next shot occurs. Penalties may include:

floater	ball 22 lands in someone else's drink (-5 points for the shooter, or opponent gets 5 free throws);
funky dunk	ball 22 lands on an opponent's food (-5 points for the shooter, or opponent gets 5 free throws);
technical	ball 22 thrown at an opponent (-5 points for the shooter, or opponent gets 5 free throws);
goal tending	shot blocked within 6 inches of basket 32 (shot counts double points).

The shot blocking device 90 may also be included to increase the game's overall level of difficulty. Optionally, shots successful in spite of attempted blocking may result in double points. Types of shot blocking may include:

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| 5 | ball block | toss or bounce second ball at opponent's ball 22 while opponent's ball 22 is in the air; |
| | swizzle swat | use shot blocking device 90 to swat opponent's ball 22 from its path. |

Different "courts" or playing configurations may be used depending upon available space and playing environment, including:

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| 10 | half court | one bottle 24 and one goal 26 for one or more players; |
| | full court | two bottles 24 and two goals 26, each placed at opposite ends of a paying surface, for two players or two teams of one or more players each; |
| 15 | super court | one bottle 24 and goal 26 for each of three or more players; |
| | back to back | one bottle 24 placed in the center of a playing surface with two goals affixed back-to-back to the single bottle 24, for two players or two teams of one or more players each; |
| 20 | firing line | several bottles 24 and goals 26 positioned spaced apart in a row with a wall as a backstop, for several players; |
| | refrigerator | no bottle, goal 26 is mounted on refrigerator; |
| 25 | cardboard box | bottle 24 is placed inside or mounted directly to one wall of a three-sided box. |

A number of game variations may be employed, including Battle Ball; Ring Ball; Bottle Pong; HORSE; Speed Ball; Make-It Take-It; Twenty-One; and Around the World. The Battle Ball game is played by two or more players on a full or super court (described above). Each player starts with an equal number of balls. 22 Players shoot

as quickly as possible ay any player's goal 26, and may block shots. Any balls 22 leaving the table are out of play; when one ball 22 remains, the player making a successful shot recovers the ball 22. The game ends when no balls 22 remain in play.

5 The Ring Ball game requires that each shot first bounce inside a shot ring 40 placed on the playing surface. Variations include one or more shot rings 40 placed in the middle of or on each side of a full or super court, or one or more shot rings 40 placed at various distances on a half court.

10 The Bottle Pong game involves locating a bottle 24 and goal on each end of a conventional ping pong table, and using a conventional pin pong paddle to strike the ball into the opponent's goal.

15 The HORSE game is substantially similar to the well-known HORSE game played with full-size equipment. Players alternate shots; a successful shot by a first player must be duplicated by all other players, and any player failing to duplicate the shot receives a letter from the word HORSE. When all letters have been received the player loses. Longer or shorter words than HORSE may be used to lengthen or shorten the game as desired.

20 The Speed Ball game involves each player attempting as many shots as possible over a timed period, such as, for example, twenty to thirty seconds. The player making the most successful shots wins.

25 The Make-It Take-It game involves players alternating turns, with each turn lasting until the player makes an unsuccessful shot attempt. The first player to reach a pre-determined number of points wins.

The Twenty-One game involves shooting from anywhere point at least two feet from the goal. If the shot is successful, the player attempts a free throw, and, if the free throw is successful, attempts another shot. If the free throw is not successful, it becomes the opposing player's turn. The first player to twenty-one points wins. Any player ending a turn with seven or thirteen points losses all their points and starts again.

The Around the World Game involves defining five to seven spot shots substantially in an arc around the goal 26. The player must make a successful shot

from each spot before progressing to the next spot; a missed shot results in the next player's turn. The first player around the arc of spots and back wins.

Referring to FIGs. 12-16, a preferred second embodiment of the bottle ball game 200 is shown adapted for substantially mimicking the kicking aspects of football, with the general object of the game 200 being to "kick" the ball 222 through the scoring structure 226, in this case resembling a football goal post assembly, to score points.

The scoring structure 226 comprises a goal post 300; a crossbar 302; a left upright 304; and a right upright 306. Generally, the scoring structure 226 is preferably constructed of wood, plastic or a similarly inexpensive, lightweight, and other wise suitable material. The goal post 300 is an elongated substantially cylindrical post, a top surface of which presents a tenon 310.

The crossbar 302 is an elongated substantially cylindrical post having a middle section 312 presenting a mortice (not shown) for receiving the tenon 310 of the goal post 300, thereby securely coupling the crossbar 302 with the goal post 300. The middle section 312 bisects the crossbar 302 into left and right sections, both of which presents holes 314 for receiving the left and right uprights 304,306.

The left and right uprights 304,306, are each elongated substantially cylindrical posts operable to fit within the holes 314 provided by the crossbar 302. Where a plurality of holes 314 are provided, the spacing of the uprights 304,306 may be varied to adjust the difficulty of successfully kicking a ball therebetween. In a preferred embodiment, the uprights 304,306 are conventional drinking straws. One or more rubber bands 365 may be used to secure the uprights 304,306 to the crossbar 302.

It will be appreciated that a wide variety of other mechanisms may be used to couple the goal post 300 with the crossbar 302, and the crossbar 302 with the uprights 304,306. Furthermore, the scoring structure 226 may, as matter of design preference, be manufactured as a non-separable unit. Thus, the present invention is independent of any particular mechanism for assembling or coupling the components

of the scoring structure 226, being concerned, instead, with the broad concept of a football goal post assembly.

The football embodiment of the game 200 may be supported similar to the basketball embodiment, described above, by a bottle 224, such as, for example, a commonly available water, juice, beer, wine, or liquor bottle, or a closed plastic bottle, such as, for example, a commonly available two liter, one liter, twenty ounce, or sixteen ounce soft drink bottle or other plastic bottle having a similarly sized cap. The bottle 224 may be weighted as needed to maintain stability by adding weighting material 315 to the bottle 224 (see FIG. 15); suitable weighting materials include, for example, marbles, sand, or fluid. The scoring structure 226 may be coupled with the bottle 224 in one of two ways. In a first embodiment, shown in FIG. 14, the retaining clip 229 is used to accomplish the coupling. In a second embodiment, shown in FIG. 15, the goal post 300 is allowed to enter the bottle 224 such that the crossbar 302 rests upon the mouth portion 244 of the bottle 224. In this latter embodiment, it may be desirable to stabilize the scoring structure 226 by adding weight to the goal post 300, such as, for example, by tying commonly available washers 317 to a bottom end thereof.

As with the preferred first game described above, the preferred second game lends itself to a number of variations. Two kicking methods are contemplated, both of which may use a kicking structure 316, as is shown in FIG. 12, comprising a kicking tee 318 and, optionally, a clip 321 for attaching the tee 318 to the playing surface. As shown, the kicking tee 318 is operable to support the ball in a substantially upright kicking position.

The first kicking method involves a well-known "finger-kick" method, whereby the ball 222 is flicked from its kicking position by the player's index or middle finger. The second kicking method involves striking the ball 222 from its kicking position using a kicking device 324, shown in FIG. 16, comprising a handle 326; an arm 328; and a striker 330. The handle 326 provides a mechanism whereby the player can grasp the device 324. The arm 328 fixedly secures to or is manufactured as part of the striker 330 and extends upwardly therefrom. A coupling mechanism 329 pivotably couples the arm 328 with the handle 326, such that a flip of the handle 326 transfers

force to the striker 330 via the coupling mechanism 329 and the arm 328. The striker 330 then transfers the force to the ball 222. Thus, in use, a player grasps the handle 326, positions the striker 330 appropriately, and twists the handle 326 using a "wrist-flipping" motion to bring the striker 330 into contact with the ball 222, thereby kicking the ball 222 toward the scoring structure 226.

It will be appreciated that both the kicking tee 318 and kicking device 324 may be eliminated or modified, as desired, without departing from the scope of the present invention.

Points may be assigned based upon type of shot and level of difficulty. Alternatively, points may be assigned based upon distance, wherein, for example, a successful kick from less than three feet away may be worth one point; three to five feet may be worth two points; and more than five feet may be worth three points. In yet another alternative, a combination of the two scoring schemes may be used, wherein, for example, points are first calculated based upon distance and thereafter increased by a multiple associated with shot difficulty.

A variety of shots are possible, some being more difficult than others:

tee kick	ball 222 is finger-kicked or wrist-flipped from the kicking tee 318 or a bottle cap resting on the playing surface;
bottle kick	ball 222 is placed on top of an open bottle and finger-kicked or wrist-flipped through the goal 226;
trick kick	ball 222 travels over, under, through, or off of another object before going through goal 226.

Shot blocking may also be included to increase the game's overall level of difficulty. Optionally, shots successful in spite of attempted blocking may result in double points. Types of shot blocking include the swizzle swat, as described above.

Different "fields" or playing configurations may be used depending upon available space and playing environment, including:

half field	1 bottle 222 and 1 goal 226 for one or more players;
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full field	2 bottles 222 and 2 goals 226, each placed at opposite ends of a playing surface, for 2 players or two teams of one or more players each;
super field	1 bottle 222 and 1 goal 226 for each of several players.

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From the preceding description, it will be appreciated that the games 20,200 of the present invention are adapted to substantially mimic playing or scoring aspects of various sports, including, for example, basketball and football, while making substantial use of inexpensive existing components. Although the invention has been described with reference to the preferred embodiments illustrated in the attached drawings, it is noted that equivalents may be employed and substitutions made herein without departing from the scope of the invention as recited in the claims.

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For example, the components of the games 20,200 may be constructed of a number of suitable alternative materials, including wood, metal, plastic, or cardboard, and may be coupled with one another using any suitable coupling mechanism. Furthermore, as mentioned, the games 20,200 are substantially independent of the suggested rules and rule variations set forth herein as an aid to playing the games 20,200.

Having thus described the preferred embodiment of the invention, what is claimed as new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent includes the following:

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